

Judicial Branch News

September/October 2006

Happy Halloween



Judicial Branch Employees Recognized

Four Judicial Branch employees received employee recognition awards from the Supreme Court earlier this month. The employees were honored for their commitment to public service and the Judiciary. The employees are Kevin Cook, Gwen Massey, Ruth Ann Popp and Karen Sedlock.

The employees were selected by a committee of Judicial Branch employees from employees nominated by judges and other judiciary employees.



Recognition award recipients pose with Chief Justice Karla Gray. From left Kevin Cook, Karen Sedlock, Chief Justice Gray, and Ruth Ann Popp.

Kevin Cook is an information technology specialist who is responsible for the Judicial Branch website and providing technical support to the Supreme Court and its staff. Kevin was honored for providing exceptional customer service and creating the new version of the Branch website.

Gwen Massey is the chief probation officer in the 18th Judicial District. Gwen was honored for her commitment to juveniles in Gallatin County. She also serves as an officer in the Montana Juvenile Probation Officers' Association.

Ruth Ann Popp is the judicial assistant to Justice Bill Leaphart and Justice Jim Rice. She has been with the court for 30 years and in that time has provided exceptional service, humor and guidance to all that have worked with her. Her knowledge of court processes and her work ethic make her a valuable asset to the court.

Karen Sedlock is the judicial education coordinator. She has worked in many different capacities for the court system in her 29 years of service. In her current position, Karen is responsible for overseeing all judicial conferences and

ensuring that participants receive quality training. Her attention to detail and commitment to quality are remarkable.

Pro Se Update

District Court Judge Russell Fagg reports that the Montana Supreme Court Commission on Self-Represented Litigants has recently approved forms on: (1) modification of parenting plans; (2) name changes; and (3) contempt of court for failure to pay child support. This action occurred at the Commission's September 7th meeting.

The Commission is encouraged that Tara Veazey, Montana Legal Services attorney, Tim Little, Americorps attorney with Montana Legal Services and Monte Jewell, a Missoula attorney, are all working hard on producing additional forms for self-represented litigants. The Commission recognizes the Montana courts are unfortunately faced with increasing numbers of parties who cannot afford an attorney. The Commission aims to assist self-represented litigants, as well as judges and clerks.

The new forms are available at: [MontanaLawHelp](http://montanalawhelp.org)

Travel Rates Change

The state lodging rates increased October 1, 2006. For the latest information, go to <http://doa.mt.gov/doatravel/travelmain.asp>. Click on Federal Lodging Rate for the guidelines for the maximum allowable rate in other states and

Montana. Remember that all airfare must be purchased on a state credit card (Procard), and out-of-state travel needs pre-approval before any travel arrangements are made. Feel free to e-mail Amber Richmond or Lindy Proue if you have a travel question.

Supreme Court Opinions Available

Supreme Court opinions and briefs are once again available on-line in a searchable format. State Law Librarian Judy Meadows announced the new search format

following several months of work on the project.

The Law Library has also created a “blog” with information about recent court decisions

and new materials in the Law Library. The information is available at:

[Montana Supreme Court Cases Search](#)

Judge Watters Featured in Billings Magazine

Judge Susan Watters was featured in the recent addition of Yellowstone Valley Woman. The article focused on her successes with a family drug court in the 13th Judicial District. The article is available at:

[YVW](#)

Financial Services Information

The personnel in Financial Services have been very busy closing out FY2006 and completing another round of budget submission for the FY2008/FY2009 biennium. We have also recently sent out FY2007 budget information so that managers have current year information to make financial decisions. The following is an updated list of personnel and their main duties.

Becky Buska – Director (444-2698, bbuska@mt.gov)

Amber Richmond – (444-2621, arichmond@mt.gov)

Processing mail, travel claims, fixed vendor payments, payments to court reporters, compiling stats.



Financial Services staff from l-r: Amber Richmond, Jessica Heller, Becky Buska, Lindy Proue, Aimee Floerchinger, Cathy Pennie and Kindra Elgen

Jessica Heller – (444-1733,
jheller@mt.gov)
Pro-card processing, D of A Property
and Supply payments, vendor payments
(DN/GAL bills, phone bills, etc.).

Lindy Proue – (444-0882,
lproue@mt.gov)
Approving payments, out-of-state travel
requests, county reimbursements, inter-
unit journals to other state agencies,
vehicle management.

Kindra Elgen – (444-1403,
kelgen@mt.gov)

All contracts, juvenile probation PIF
program contracts and payments,
purchasing issues (term contracts, bids,
etc).

Aimee Floerchinger (444-2672,
afloerchinger@mt.gov)
Analyst for JD 1-12, grant accounting,
restitution, fines/fees, budget status
reporting.

Cathy Pennie (444-1810,
cpennie@mt.gov)
Analyst for JD13-22, grant accounting,
restitution, fines/fees, budget status
reporting.

Welcome New Employees

***Chris Oliveira
1st District Law Clerk***

***Sue Chvilicek
6th District JPO***

***Dorothy Johnson
8th District Office Asst***

***Debra Younggren
8th District Office Asst***

***Tammy Hanson
12th District Probation
Asst***

***Elizabeth Stuckey
13th District Law Clerk***

***Laurie Bruno
13th District Office Asst***

***Levi Knott
18th District JPO***

***Dana Pepper
18th District Law Clerk***

***Frank Rutzke
20th District JPO***

***Cynthia Burns
IT Support Spec.***

***Congratulations to Joy
Mariska, who is retiring
from her position as the
Chief Juvenile
Probation Officer in the
13th Judicial District
effective November 17.***

Court Central Repository Up and Running

One of the key components of the Judicial Branch's information technology plan – a central repository for court data – is now in operation. This system allows the Judicial Branch to exchange information electronically with other state agencies and provides a needed back-up system to local courts.

The first exchanges to be supported through the repository are conviction, driver suspension and driver reinstatement notices to the Department of Justice's driver control system. Limited courts currently send voluminous amounts of paper documenting these court actions to the DOJ. Reducing the amount of paper and transmitting

the records electronically will save time and reduce the risk of errors in data entry.

The Gallatin County Justice Court and the Bozeman Municipal Court are currently reporting electronically to the DOJ and the Yellowstone County Justice Court will be reporting electronically shortly. Eventually, the rest of the courts of limited jurisdiction will be added.

The repository also serves as a central location for catastrophic disaster data recovery. Every night a "snapshot" of the local court database is taken and this data is stored in a central database in Helena. In the event of a catastrophic disaster affecting a local court and the local court's regular data back-up – the court's case information can be recreated from the data stored in the central

repository. This is crucial for protecting the data the court needs to operate.

Finally, the web component of the repository allows authorized users to view all participating court calendars, cases and case statistics.

Currently, there are 70 courts of limited jurisdiction participating in the court central repository. The 4th Judicial District, the pilot site for the district court version of FullCourt system, will also be able to copy its data to the repository for disaster recovery.

If you would like more information on this or any other IT matters, please contact Karen Nelson at 841-2944.

The Judicial Branch newsletter is distributed six times a year through e-mail. Printed copies are not produced. For more information or comments please contact Beth McLaughlin at 406-841-2966.